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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between and among the results of three types of reading assessments in the first grade: a standardized reading test (the Stanford Achievement Tests); an informal reading inventory (the Classroom Reading Inventory); and teacher judgment of student rank in reading achievement. The study included 165 first grade students with a mean age of 84.6 months. The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between the scores of the informal reading inventory word recognition and comprehension tests and the reading portions of the standardized achievement test. The Spearman-Rho correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between teacher judgment and the students' performance on the informal reading inventory and the standardized reading test. A statistically significant positive correlation was indicated between the informal reading inventory and standardized test scores. There were also positive correlations between achievement variables and the word recognition and also the comprehension scores of the Classroom Reading Inventory. Teacher opinion correlated with all subtests of the standardized test and the word recognition portion of the reading inventory. The achievement of all combined classrooms and most individual classrooms was average or above, based on national norms. (PN)

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FIRST GRADE READING ASSESSMENT: TEACHER OPINIONS, STANDARDIZED READING TESTS, AND INFORMAL READING INVENTORIES

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Most educators are cautious about relying on any one technique when making educational decisions about students. In recent years, however, more and more schools are using a single standardized test to make important educational decisions about students. Unfortunately, children as young as first grade are judged by these tests. Standardized tests are being used widely for promoting and retaining students at all levels. Test scores are being used to group students homogeneously even though ability grouping often has negative effects on the achievement and self-concepts of low-ability students (Findley & Bryan, 1970, 1975).

It seems unwise to use standardized tests as the only basis for such decisions as promotion and ability grouping. More importantly, it is not sensible to equate scores on tests with learning. A decade ago Perrone (1975) emphasized that normative testing and other narrow evaluation measures limit students' growth as learners by causing teachers to spend time on what is measureable rather than on what is meaningful. Bussis (1982) explained how teaching isolated skills displaces actual reading in the classroom; this focus on skills by teachers is often a direct result of the emphasis on standardized tests.

Over the years, a number of studies have compared standardized achievement tests with other measures of reading ability and performance. Most of the studies found that the standardized tests show students to be at a reading level one to two years higher than their reading level in classroom texts as measured by informal inventories (Harris & Sipay, 1980; Rupley & Blair, 1979). Reading authorities such as Dechant (1981), Zintz (1981), and McKenna (1983) have recommended informal tests as the best measure for placing students in appropriate reading materials. A study by Horodezky and Labercane

(1983) suggested that the most consistent predictor of reading performance was the Classroom Reading Inventory (Silvaroli, 1984).

According to McKenna (1983) and Schell (1982), teacher judgment provides important information for assessing students' reading achievement. Oliver and Arnold (1978) reported that teacher judgments are at least as accurate as standardized test scores in assessing students' reading ability.

There is no conclusive evidence on the best means of measuring students' reading ability. However, studies consistently conclude that teacher judgment and informal reading inventories are both useful and necessary for this purpose. Most authorities agree that standardized reading achievement tests are being overused and misused in our schools.

The present investigators sought to answer the following question: What is the relationship between and among the results of three recommended types of reading assessments in the first grade? The three types compared were a standardized reading test, an informal reading inventory, and teacher judgment.

Methodology and Data Source

Subjects

The sample for this study consisted of 165 first grade students, 86 boys and 79 girls; 101 were nonminority and 64 were minority group members; 68.5% (113) paid for lunch and the remainder were on free or reduced lunch. The mean age of the sample was 84.6 months.

Procedures

All students were administered the Classroom Reading Inventory (CRI), an informal reading inventory which has a word recognition subtest and a comprehension subtest. Reading subtest scores from the Stanford Achievement Tests, the state-wide testing program, were also used. Teacher opinions were

obtained by asking teachers to rank order their students from highest to lowest in reading achievement.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in two ways to examine the data. First, the Pearson product-moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between the scores of the informal reading inventory word recognition and comprehension tests and the reading portions of the standardized achievement test. Second, the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between teacher judgment and the students' performance on the informal reading inventory and the standardized reading test.

Results

Results indicate a positive correlation which is statistically significant between the CRI and standardized test scores. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the individual classroom correlations which show that most achievement variables correlate in the high and moderate range at better than $p < .01$. There were also positive correlations between the word recognition portion of the CRI and other achievement variables. A few individual classrooms (See Table 1) have low-moderate correlations and one classroom was in the low range on the reading total.

Insert Table 1 about here

Again there were positive correlations between the CRI comprehension scores and most other achievement variables. One classroom had very low correlations but the remaining six were in the low-moderate to high range.

Insert Table 2 about here

Teacher opinion correlated significantly with all subtests of the standardized reading achievement test and the informal reading inventory word recognition portion (ranging from .70 to .75). There was a low-moderate correlation (.41) between teacher opinion and comprehension as measured by the comprehension portion of the informal reading inventory.

Insert Table 3 about here

On the reading total subtest of the Stanford Achievement Tests, the means of all classes were at or above the 5th stanine; the lowest boundary for the 5th stanine was used on all subtests. Thus, when looking at the classrooms as a group as well as individually the reading achievement scores

Insert Table 4 about here

indicate competent readers. The number of students at or above the 5th stanine on the Stanford total reading test was 104 or 63.0% (See Table 5). On the word recognition test of the Classroom Reading Inventory, 50.3% (83) of the students were at 1st grade level or above. On the reading comprehension portion of the Classroom Reading Inventory, 69.7% (115) of the students were at 1st grade level and above. It would seem that these percentages are fairly

close but further analysis reveals that the same students are not in each group (See Table 5). For instance, there were 47.9% (79) students who were

Insert Table 5 about here

considered at or above grade level on all three tests: Stanford total reading score, word recognition on the CRI, and comprehension on the CRI. Seventeen students (10.3%) scored at or above grade level on both the Stanford total reading tests and the CRI comprehension. Four students (2.4%) were at or above grade level on just the word recognition and comprehension parts of the CRI, but were below the 5th stanine on the Stanford total reading score. Two students, 1.2%, were at or above grade level on both the Stanford total reading test and the word recognition portion of the CRI. Twenty-one students (12.7%) were at or above grade level on only one of the three measures; this includes 9.1% (15) who were at or above grade level on only the comprehension portion of the CRI and 3.6% (6) who were above the 5th stanine on only the Stanford total reading tests. No student scored at or above grade level on just the word recognition portion of the CRI.

Insert Table 6 about here

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study are as follows:

1. When looked at as groups, the achievement of all combined classrooms and most individual classrooms was average or above, i.e., at or above the 5th stanine, based on national norms.
2. Moderate to high correlations were found between standardized and

informal measures of achievement, indicating that there is general agreement between and among these measures. As noted in the review of the literature, results of other studies have suggested that standardized tests show students tend to be at a reading level higher than that on informal reading inventories. It is possible, however, this difference does not occur until more advanced grades.

3. Even though there was general agreement among measures, some good readers could be underrated if not examined for comprehension with an informal reading inventory.

Conclusions

It is apparent that there is significant agreement among scores which means that as we look at each classroom we know that children would rank relatively the same on all measures. However, a high correlation of .80 only accounts for 64% of the variance which suggests the need to examine those cases which are divergent. In examining the number of children in each classroom who achieve at grade level or above on the various tests, 9% of the children obtained scores at or above grade level on only CRI comprehension. It would appear that these children succeed in comprehension as they read yet do not do well on segmental types of tests. It seems very likely that a number of students (about 1 in 10) who can read as measured by the CRI comprehension are being underrated. This suggests that, since the CRI comprehension portion most nearly represents actual reading experience, these children are indeed readers. It may be that students who are contextual readers and who are competent readers do not score in the average range on achievement tests that examine parts of words or individual words or on word recognition portions of informal reading inventories.

We recommend the use of more holistic measures such as the cloze, miscue

analysis, and both silent and oral informal reading inventories which may not underrate children who can read. There is a need to study more intensively the individual cases who fall in this category, i.e., doing well on the CRI comprehension but not on other measures.

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Table 1
Pearson Product-Moment Correlations of
Classroom Reading Inventory Word Recognition
with Stanford Achievement Test Variables

Classroom No.	W.S. Stan.	W.C. Stan.	Read Comp.	Read Stanf.	Read Total	CRI W.R.	CRI Comp.
1 n = 22	.6798*	.8611*	.8881*	.8956*	.8887*	-	.7897*
2 n = 20	.7908*	.7086*	.7759*	.8620*	.8749*	-	.8767*
3 n = 21	.9051*	.9420*	.9546*	.9504*	.9448*	-	.7640*
4 n = 25	.7654*	.6463*	.6972*	.5958*	.7409*	-	.6348*
5 n = 21	.6898*	.8061*	.8630*	.8828*	.8804*	-	.8506*
6 n = 28	.6117*	.4552*	.5929*	.5699*	.3754	-	.5425*
7 n = 28	.7922*	.8788*	.8322*	.8621*	.8345*	-	.8452*

*Significant at .01 or better

Table 2
Pearson Product-Moment Correlations of
Classroom Reading Inventory Comprehension with
Stanford Achievement Test Variables

Classroom No.	W.S. Stan.	W.C. Stan.	Read Comp.	Read Stan.	Read Total	CRI W.R.	CRI Comp.
1 n = 22	.8056*	.8865*	.8486*	.8817*	.9109*	.7897*	-
2 n = 20	.7836*	.6654*	.8061*	.8282*	.8447*	.8767*	-
3 n = 21	.7717*	.7399*	.7675*	.7421*	.7441*	.7640*	-
4 n = 25	.6390*	.7203*	.7629*	.6898*	.7600*	.6348*	-
5 n = 21	.7559*	.8440*	.8277*	.8768*	.8915*	.8506*	-
6 n = 28	.0300	.1609	.1513	.1454	.1516	.5425*	-
7 n = 28	.7091*	.8086*	.7848*	.8316*	.7788*	.8452*	-

*Significant at .01 or better

Table 3
Spearman Rho Correlations with
Teacher Opinion and Achievement Variables

Classroom No.	W.S. Stan.	W.C. Stan.	Read Comp.	Read Stan.	Read Total	CRI W.R.	CRI Comp.
1 n = 22	.6996	.7882	.8978	.8703	.8338	.8067	.8782
2 n = 20	.7853	.6265	.8148	.8707	.8486	.8874	.9266
3 n = 21	.8984	.8769	.9004	.8916	.9061	.8746	.8212
4 n = 25	.7386	.7147	.7482	.6830	.7776	.7567	.6190
5 n = 21	.6738	.6675	.6660	.7122	.7104	.7468	.6429
6 n = 28	.8088	.5838	.7525	.7622	.5227	.7270	.6777
7 n = 28	.6523	.8491	.7249	.7826	.7497	.6515	.6857

Table 4
Classroom Means on Stanford Achievement Test
Scaled Scores and CRI Reading Levels

Classroom No.	W.S. Stan.	W.C. Stan.	Read Comp.	Read Stan.	Read Total	*CRI W.R.	*CRI Comp.
1 n = 22	516.0	489.8	486.1	488.1	496.6	3.00	3.54
S.D.	(40.2)	(46.5)	(51.5)	(49.6)	(43.1)	(1.54)	(2.34)
2 n = 20	541.7	531.2	521.7	523.0	528.7	3.55	4.25
S.D.	(42.0)	(61.1)	(59.7)	(56.8)	(48.7)	(1.67)	(2.02)
3 n = 21	542.1	521.1	517.6	522.5	532.4	4.09	4.33
S.D.	(55.0)	(57.1)	(66.8)	(68.0)	(67.3)	(2.02)	(2.08)
4 n = 25	531.9	520.5	506.6	516.1	518.4	3.16	3.48
S.D.	(46.7)	(54.3)	(53.1)	(50.5)	(47.6)	(1.62)	(2.02)
5 n = 21	519.9	483.8	496.5	494.1	501.9	3.42	3.71
S.D.	(45.9)	(57.8)	(58.1)	(54.5)	(47.2)	(1.63)	(2.14)
6 n = 28	564.9	531.6	524.1	528.3	540.1	4.42	5.96
S.D.	(45.6)	(47.5)	(55.1)	(54.1)	(51.8)	(1.34)	(5.76)
7 n = 28	538.9	528.4	527.8	528.8	529.2	4.10	4.60
S.D.	(48.1)	(50.9)	(58.4)	(56.5)	(52.9)	(1.74)	(2.18)

*0 = below preprimer, 1 = preprimer, 2 = primer, 3 = 1st grade, etc.

Table 5
Frequency Distributions of Students by
Grade Level Placement for Each Classroom Unit

Classroom No.	At or above 5th Stanine on Total Reading Stanford		At or above grade level on Word Rec. CRI		At or above grade level on Comp. CRI	
1	7		5		12	
2	16		11		14	
3	12		12		16	
4	15		6		15	
5	11		9		12	
6	22		21		26	
7	21		19		20	
Totals	104	63.0%	83	50.3%	115	69.7%

Table 6
Frequency of Students at or above Grade
Level on the Stanford and CRI

	Classroom No.							Total	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
All three: Total Reading Stanford CRI Word Rec., CRI Comp.	4	11	11	8	9	19	17	79	47.9%
Two: Total Reading Stanford, CRI Word Rec.	1						1	2	1.2%
Two: Total Reading Stanford, CRI Comp.	2	2	1	6	1	3	2	17	10.3%
Two: CRI Word Rec., CRI Comp.			2			2		4	2.4%
One: Total Reading Stanford		2		3			1	6	3.6%
One: Word Rec. CRI								0	
One: Comp. CRI	6	1	2	1	2	2	1	15	9.1%